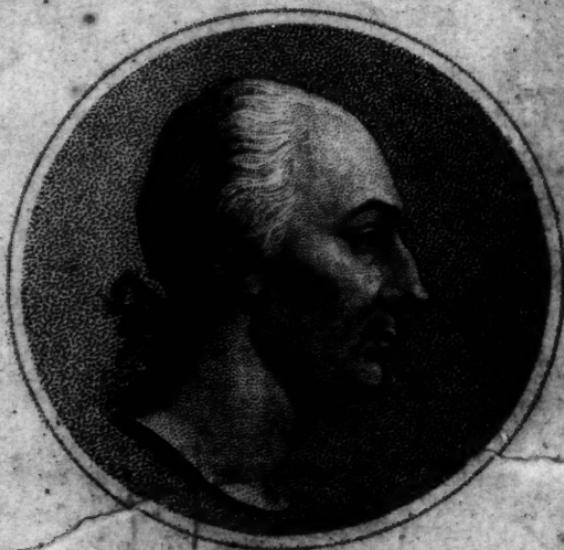


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THE
LAW OF NATURE,
OR
PRINCIPLES OF MORALITY,
DEDUCED FROM THE
PHYSICAL CONSTITUTION
OF
MANKIND AND THE UNIVERSE.

By C. F. VOLNEY.

" For modes of faith, let graceless zealots fight ;
" His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right."
POPE.

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OF THE
EDITOR.

IF books are to be estimated by their bulk, this would have but a very slender claim upon the public; but if they are to be appreciated by their intrinsic contents, this will probably rank among some of the most important.

As nothing, in general, is of more real utility than a good elementary treatise, so nothing is attended with greater dif-

ficulty in the composition, and even in the perusal of it ; because, in such a one, there is nothing but analysis and definition, and an exhibition of truth with all the simplicity of precision. If the work be deficient in truth and precision, its object is totally defeated ; and, if it has to boast of both, it is liable to become abstruse, even by dint of its force.

All the treatises on ethics, that have hitherto appeared, evidently labour under the former of these defects, being only a confused mass of detached and unconnected maxims, of precepts without ostensible causes, and of actions without pre-existent motives. The pedantic

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race of moralizers, that have addressed themselves to mankind on this topic, have treated them like so many babies, and have kept them in awe by terrifying them with invisible ghosts and hobgoblins; but now, when the stature of man's mind is more advanced in growth, it is time that it should bear the language of reason. The period is arrived, when men should be taught, by the conviction of their own senses, that the radical source of their melioration and moral improvement is to be looked for, in their organization, in the direction and interest of their passions, and in the very constituent elements of their existence. Such is the advantage of the system ex-

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bibited in the present work, that morality, by deriving its fundamental principles from the very nature of things, becomes, like them, fixed and immutable : whilst, on the contrary, in all the theological systems, by being built upon arbitrary opinions, indemonstrable in themselves, and frequently absurd, it fluctuates, declines, and perishes with them, leaving mankind in a state of absolute depravity. It is high time to prove, that morality is a physical and geometrical science, and, as such, susceptible, like the rest, of calculation and mathematical demonstration. But, since a real system of ethics must be founded on actual facts, and not on the romantic

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dreams of a fanciful imagination, it may, it is true, have more obstacles, on that account, to combat with, before its principles can become general and popular: yet it has one consolation to support it, that it will gain strength even by the opposition that is made against it; and the eternal religion of nature will eventually bear sway, and overturn all the transitory religions of human fabrication.

The French treatise, of which the present is a translation, was published in 1793, and appears from its title, of "Catechism of a French Citizen," to be intended as a national manual of ethics; but, as it may equally be entitled, The Catechism of good Sense

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and good People, we judge, that it may be naturalized and adopted, in that view, in other nations. The simple and pointed style in which it is written can hardly fail to be agreeable to those who are fond of that kind of composition which characterises the works of **FRANKLIN**. And, if it does not become a classical author in the plan of education already projected, it may at any rate afford some materials for the construction of a better one.



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THE LAW OF NATURE.

CHAPTER I.

Of the Law of Nature.

Q. *WHAT is the law of nature?*

A. It is the regular and constant order of events, according to which *God* rules the universe; the order which his wisdom presents to the senses and reason of mankind, to serve them as an

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equal and general rule of action, and to conduct them, without distinction of country or sect, towards happiness and perfection.

Q. Give me a clear definition of the word LAW.

A. The word *law*, taken in its literal sense, signifies *reading*; because, in early times, ordinances and regulations principally composed the readings delivered to the people; which were made in order that they might observe them, and not incur the penalties attached to their infraction: whence it follows, that, the ori-

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ginal usage explaining the true idea, a law may be defined to be, "A command or a prohibition of an action, with the expressed clause of a penalty attached to the infraction, or a reward annexed to the observation of the order."

Q. Are there such orders in nature?

A. Yes.

Q. What means the word NATURE?

A. The word *nature* comprehends three different significations.

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1. It means the *universe*, or material world: we say, according to this signification, the *beauties of nature*, the *riches of nature*: that is, of the objects in heaven and on earth presented to our contemplation.

2. It means the *power* which animates and moves the universe, considering this power as a distinct being, such as the soul is supposed to be with respect to the body. In this second sense we say, the *intentions of nature*, the *incomprehensible secrets of nature*.

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3. It means the partial operation of this power, as exerted in each individual being, or in any class of beings; and we say, in this third sense, the *nature* of man is an enigma; every being acts according to its *nature*.

Now, since the actions of each individual, or of each class of beings, are subjected to constant and general rules, which cannot be departed from without changing and disturbing some general or particular order of things, to these rules of action and motion,

which are against the law of nature.

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is given the name of natural laws, or *laws of nature*.

Q. Give me examples of these laws.

A. It is a law of nature that the sun enlightens in succession every part of the surface of the terrestrial globe : that his presence excites light and heat : that heat, acting on the waters, produces vapours : that these vapours, raised in clouds into the higher regions of the atmosphere, form themselves into rain or snow, and supply, without ceasing, the water of springs and rivers.

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It is a law of nature that water flows from an upper to a lower situation ; that it seeks its level ; that it is heavier than air ; that all bodies tend towards the earth ; that flame rises towards the sky ; that it destroys the organization of vegetables and animals ; that air is essential to the life of certain animals ; that in certain cases water suffocates and kills them ; that certain juices of plants and certain minerals attack their organs, and destroy their life ; and the same of a variety of facts.

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Now, since these facts, and many similar ones, are constant, regular, and immutable, they become so many real and positive commands to which man is bound to conform, under the express penalty of punishment attached to their infraction, or well-being connected with their observance. So that, if a man were to pretend to see clearly in the dark, or is regardless of the progress of the seasons, or the action of the elements ; if he pretends to exist under water without drowning ; to handle fire without burning

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himself ; to deprive himself of air without suffocating ; or to drink poison without destroying himself ; he receives from each infraction of the law of nature a corporal punishment proportioned to his transgression. If, on the contrary, he observes these laws, and finds his practice on the precise and regular relation which they bear to him, he preserves his existence, and renders it as happy as it is capable of being rendered ; and since all these laws, considered in relation to the human species, have in view

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only one common end, that of their preservation and their happiness; whence it has been agreed to assemble together the different ideas, and express them by a single word, and call them collectively by the name of the *law of nature*.



CHAPTER II.

Characters of the Law of Nature.

Q. *WHAT* are the characters of the law of nature?

A. We may reckon ten principal ones.

Q. *What is the first?*

A. To be inherent in, and essential to, the existence of things; consequently to be primitive and anterior to every other law, so that all those, which men have adopted from time to time, are

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only imitations of this ; the perfection of which laws is to be measured by their resemblance with this primordial model.

Q. What is the second ?

A. It is to emanate immediately from God, and to be by him offered to the contemplation of every man, while others are presented to us by men only, who may happen to be either deceivers or deceived.

Q. What is the third ?

A. It is to be common to every time and country ; that is, to be one and universal.

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Q. *Is there no other law which is universal?*

A. No; for no other is suited and applicable to every people upon earth; all are local and accidental, sprung from the differing circumstances of places and persons; so that if a given man, or a given event, had not existed, a given law would not have taken place.

Q. *What is the fourth character?*

A. That of being uniform and invariable.

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Q. *Is there no other law which is uniform and invariable?*

A. No; for that which according to one is good and virtuous, is evil and vicious according to another; and what is at one time approved, is often condemned at another by the same law.

Q. *What is the fifth character?*

A. To be evident and palpable, since it consists wholly of facts ever present to our senses, and capable of demonstration.

Q. *Are not other laws evident?*

A. No; for they are founded

on past and doubtful facts; on equivocal and suspicious testimony; and on proofs which cannot be presented to the senses.

Q. *What is the sixth character?*

A. To be reasonable; because its precepts, and its whole doctrine, are conformable to reason, and agreeable to the human understanding.

Q. *Is no other law reasonable?*

A. No; for they all contradict the reason and understanding of man, and impose upon him, tyrannically, a blind and impracticable belief.

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Q. *What is the seventh character?*

A. To be just; because in this law the punishment is proportioned to the transgression.

Q. *Are not other laws just?*

A. No; for they frequently attach, to merit or to criminality, disproportionate punishment or reward, and impute merit and criminality to actions which are null or indifferent.

Q. *What is the eighth character?*

A. To be pacific and tolerant; because, according to the law of

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nature, all men being brethren, and equal in rights, it advises all to peace and toleration, even for their errors.

Q. Are not other laws pacific?

A. No; for they all breathe dissention, discord, and war, and divide men among each other by means of exclusive pretensions to truth and power.

Q. What is the ninth character of this law?

A. To be equally beneficent to all men, and to teach them all the true method of being better and happier.

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Q. *Are not the rest likewise beneficent?*

A. No ; for none teaches the true road to happiness ; they all really amount to nothing but pernicious or futile performances : and this is proved by facts, since, after so many laws, religions, legislators, and prophets, men remain still as unhappy and as ignorant as they were five thousand years ago.

Q. *What is the last character of the law of nature?*

A. It is its being of itself sufficient to render men happier and

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better, because it includes whatever is good and useful in every other law, civil or religious : that is, it is in its essence the moral part of them all ; so that, were they divested of it, they would be reduced to the state of chimerical and imaginary opinions, and be of no practical utility.

Q. *Recapitulate all these characters.*

A. I have said that the law of nature is,

Primitive ;

Immediate, or of original emanation ;

B 3

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Universal ;

Invariable ;

Evident ;

Reasonable ;

Just ;

Pacific ;

Beneficent ;

And of itself sufficient ;

And it is because it unites in itself all these attributes of perfection and of truth, that there has always existed in the human heart an involuntary and secret inclination to regard it as, in a peculiar sense, the true religion; the only one adapted to the nature of

THE LAW OF NATURE. 31

man, and the only one worthy of God, from whom it emanates.

Q. *If, as you assert, it emanates immediately from God, does it teach us his existence?*

A. Yes; very positively; for, every man, who observes with attention the astonishing scene of the universe, the more he meditates on the properties and attributes of each existence, and on the admirable order and harmony of their motions, the more will he be convinced that there is a supreme agent, a universal and identical mover, designed by

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the name God: and it is so true that the law of nature is sufficient to raise us to the knowledge of God, that whatever men have pretended to know of him by other means has been constantly found to be ridiculous and absurd; and they have been obliged to return to the unchangeable notions of natural reason.

Q. It is not true then, that the followers of the law of nature are atheists?

A. No; it is not true. On the contrary, they have stronger and more noble ideas of the Divi-

THE LAW OF NATURE. 33

nity than the greater part of mankind ; for they do not defile it by the addition of the weaknesses and passions of human nature.

Q. *What is the worship which they render him ?*

A. A worship which consists entirely in action ; in the observation and practice of all the rules which the supreme wisdom has imposed upon the motions of each being ; eternal and inalterable rules, which maintain the order and harmony of the universe, and which, considered in rela-

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tion to man, compose the law of nature.

Q. Was the law of nature ever known before the present day?

A. It has been spoken of in every age. The greater part of law-givers have pretended to make it the basis of their laws; but they have brought forward only a few of its precepts, and have had but vague ideas of it as a whole.

Q. Why has this happened?

A. Because, though it is simple in its basis, it forks, in its development and its consequences, a complicated aggregate which

requires the knowledge of a number of facts, and the whole sagacity of reason, in order to be understood.

Q. Does not instinct alone instruct us in the law of nature?

A. No; for instinct signifies only that blind sentiment which leads us, without discrimination, towards whatever pleases our senses.

Q. Why then is it said that the law of nature is engraven on the hearts of all men?

A. It is said, for two reasons: 1st. Because it has been remarked

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that there are actions and sentiments common to all mankind, arising from their similar organization. 2d. Because it was an opinion of the ancient philosophers, that men were born into the world with innate or ready-formed ideas ; an opinion which is now demonstrated to be an error.

Q. Do philosophers then deceive themselves ?

A. Yes ; they do.

Q. How happens this ?

A. 1st. From their nature as men. 2d. Because ignorant per-

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sons call every man who reasons a philosopher, whether he reason well or ill. 3d. Because those who reason on a variety of subjects, and are the first to reason on them, are liable to deceive themselves.

Q. Since the law of nature is not written, may it not be considered as arbitrary and ideal?

A. No; because it consists altogether in facts, whose demonstration may be at any time recalled before the senses, and form a science as precise and exact as those of geometry and mathe-

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matics : and this very circumstance, that the law of nature forms an exact science, is the reason why men, who are born in ignorance, and live in carelessness, have, till this day, known it only superficially.

CHAPTER III.

The Principles of the Law of Nature as they relate to Man.

Q. *UNFOLD the principles of the law of nature as they relate to man.*

A. They are simple, and reducible to a single fundamental precept.

Q. *What is this precept?*

A. Self-preservation.

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Q. *Is not happiness likewise a precept of the law of nature?*

A. Yes; but as happiness is an accidental circumstance which takes place, only in consequence of the unfolding of the faculties of man, and the development of the social system, it is not the primary and direct end proposed by nature. It is an object of luxury superadded to the necessary and fundamental object of self-preservation.

Q. *In what manner does nature command self-preservation?*

A. By two powerful and involuntary sensations which she has

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attached as two guides or guardian genii to all our actions : one, the sensation of pain, by which she informs us of, and turns us from, whatever tends to our destruction.

The other, the sensation of pleasure, by which she attracts and leads us towards every thing that tends to our preservation, and the unfolding of our faculties.

Q. *Pleasure then is not an evil or a sin, as the casuists have pretended?*

A. No ; it is of that class only when it tends to the destruction of life and health, which, as the

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casuists themselves confess, are derived to us from God.

Q. *Is pleasure the principal object of our existence, as some philosophers have asserted?*

A. No ; no more than pain is : by pleasure, nature encourages us to live; by pain, it makes us shrink from death.

Q. *How do you prove this assertion?*

A. By two palpable facts ; the one, the pleasure, carried too far, conducts into destruction : for instance, a man, who abuses the pleasure of eating and drinking,

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attacks his health, and injures his existence. The other, that pain sometimes tends to our preservation : for instance, a man, who orders his mortified limb to be amputated, suffers pain, but it is in order that he may not perish altogether.

Q. But does not this prove that our senses may deceive us with respect to this end of self-preservation ?

A. Yes ; they may for a time.

Q. How do our sensations deceive us ?

A. In two ways ; through our ignorance and our passions.

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Q. When do they deceive us through our ignorance ?

A. When we act without knowing the action and effect of objects on our senses : for instance, when a man handles nettles without knowing their quality of stinging ; or when he chews opium in ignorance of its soporific properties.

Q. When do they deceive us through our passions ?

A. When, though we are acquainted with the hurtful action of objects, we, notwithstanding, give way to the violence of our

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desires and our appetites : for instance, when a man, who knows that wine inebriates, drinks, notwithstanding, to excess.

Q. What results from these facts ?

A. The result is, that the ignorance in which we enter the world, and the inordinate appetites to which we give ourselves up, are opposed to our self-preservation ; that, in consequence, the instruction of our minds, and the moderation of our passions, are two obligations, or two laws, immediately derived from the first law of preservation.

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Q. *But if we are born ignorant, is not ignorance a part of the law of nature?*

A. No more than it is for us to remain in the naked and feeble state of infancy : far from its being a law of nature, ignorance is an obstacle in the way of all her laws. It is the true original sin.

Q. *Whence then has it happened that moralists have existed who considered it as a virtue and a perfection?*

A. Because, through caprice, or misanthropy, they have confounded the abuse of our know-

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ledge itself ; as though, because men misemploy the faculty of speaking, it were necessary to cut out their tongue ; as though perfection and virtue consisted in the annihilation, and not in the unfolding and proper employment, of our faculties.

Q. *Is instruction then necessarily indispensable for man's existence ?*

A. Yes ; so indispensable, that, without it, he must be every instant struck and wounded by all the beings which surround him ; for, if he did not know the effects of fire, he would burn him-

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self; of water, he would be drowned; of opium, he would be poisoned. If, in the savage state, he is unacquainted with the cunning and subterfuges of animals, and the art of procuring game, he perishes with hunger: if, in a state of society, he does not know the progress of the seasons, he can neither cultivate the earth, nor provide himself with food: and the like may be said of all his actions arising from all his wants.

Q. But can man, in a state of solitude, acquire all these ideas ne-

THE LAW OF NATURE. 49-

necessary to his existence and the unfolding of his faculties.

A. No; he cannot do it but by the assistance of his fellows living with him in a state of society.

Q. *But is not a state of society a state unnatural to man?*

A. No; it is, on the contrary, a necessity, a law imposed upon him by his very organization; for, 1st. Nature has so constituted the human being, that he does not behold his likeness of another sex without experiencing emotions, and an attraction inducing him to live in a domestic state,

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which is already a state of society: 2d. In rendering him sensible, she has so organized him, that the sensations of others are reflected into himself, and excite in him co-sentiments of pleasure or pain, which become the attractive force and indissoluble bond of social life: 3d. In fine, the state of society, established on the wants of man, is nothing more than an additional means of fulfilling the law of preservation: and to say, that such a state is unnatural, because it is more advanced towards perfe-

tion, is to say that a fruit, which in the woods is bitter and wild, is no longer a production of nature, after having become sweet, and delicious in the garden in which it has been cultivated.

Q. *Why then have philosophers denominated the savage state of life a state of perfection?*

A. Because, as I have before observed, the vulgar have often given the appellation of philosophers to capricious persons, who, through moroseness, wounded vanity, or disgust with the vices of

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social life, have formed a chimerical idea of the savage state, contradictory to their own system of the perfectability of man.

Q. What is the true meaning of the word philosopher?

A. The word philosopher signifies *lover of wisdom*: now, since wisdom consists in the practice of the laws of nature, that man is a true philosopher who understands these laws in their full extent, and, with precision, renders his conduct conformable to them.

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Q. *What is man in a savage state?*

A. A brute and ignorant animal; a mischievous and ferocious beast, like a bear or an ourang-outang.

Q. *Is he happy in such a state?*

A. No; for he has but the sensations of the moment; and these sensations are habitually sentiments of violent and pressing wants which he cannot gratify; seeing that he is ignorant by nature, and feeble by his state of insulation from society.

Q. *Is he free?*

A. No; he is the most slavish of beings; his life depends on

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all that surrounds him ; he has not the power to eat when he is hungry, to rest himself when he is weary, or to warm himself when he is cold : he is in danger of perishing every instant. Nature, it is true, has exhibited such beings only, as it were, by chance : and, it is evident, that the efforts of the human race have, from the beginning, been employed to extricate it from this state of violence ; so strong is the desire of preservation.

Q. But does not this desire of self-preservation produce in individuals egoism, that is, the love of self; and is not egoism abhorrent to the social state?

A. No; for, if by egoism is understood an inclination to injure others, it is no longer the love of self but the hatred of our neighbour. The love of self, taken in its true sense, is not only consistent with a state of society, but is likewise its firmest support; since we are under a necessity of not doing injury to others, lest

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they should, in return, do injury to ourselves.

Thus the preservation of man, and the unfolding of his faculties, which have in view the same end, are the true law which nature has followed in the production of the human species: and from this simple and fruitful principle, are derived, must be referred, and ultimately measured, all our ideas of good and evil, vice and virtue, justice and injustice, truth and error, of what is permitted and what is forbid-

JURY

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den; the foundation of all moral conduct, whether in the individual man, or the man of social life.



CHAPTER IV.

Of the Basis of Morality—Of Good—Of Evil—Of Sin—Of Crimes—Of Vice and Virtue.

Q. *WHAT is good, according to the law of nature?*

A. Whatever tends to preserve and ameliorate mankind.

Q. *What is evil?*

A. Whatever tends to the destruction and deterioration of the human race.

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Q. *What is understood by PHYSICAL good or evil, and MORAL good or evil?*

A. By the word *physical*, is meant whatever acts immediately upon the body: health is a physical good; sickness is a physical evil. By *moral*, is understood whatever is effected by consequences more or less remote: calumny is a moral evil; a fair reputation is a moral good; because both of them are the occasion of certain dispositions and habits in other men, with respect to ourselves, which are useful or prejudicial to

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our well-being, and which attack or contribute to the means of existence.

Q. *Whatever then tends to preservation or production is good?*

A. Yes; and this is the reason why some legislators have ranked, in the class of things pleasing to God, the cultivation of a field, and the fruitfulness of a woman.

Q. *Every thing which tends to bring on death is of consequence evil?*

A. Yes; and, for this reason, some legislators have extended

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the idea of evil and sin to the killing of any animals.

Q. *The murder of a man, is it then a crime according to the law of nature?*

A. Yes; and the greatest that can be committed; for, all other evils may be repaired; but murder can never be done away.

Q. *What is a sin according to the law of nature?*

A. Whatever tends to disturb the order established by nature, for the preservation and perfectability of man and of society.

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Q. *Can intention be a merit or a crime?*

A. No; for it is only an idea without reality; but it is a beginning of sin and evil, by the inclination to act, of which it is the cause.

Q. *What is virtue according to the law of nature?*

A. The practice of actions which are useful to the individual and to society.

Q. *What signifies the word individual?*

A. It signifies a person considered as insulated from every other.

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Q. *What is vice according to the law of nature?*

A. It is the practice of actions prejudicial to the individual and to society.

Q. *Have not virtue and vice an object purely spiritual and abstracted from sense?*

A. No; they are always ultimately referable to a physical end; and this end is invariably the destruction or preservation of the body.

Q. *Have vice and virtue degrees of strength and intensity?*

Ans. *No, for as much as there is no vice except a or glo-*

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A. Yes; according to the importance of the faculties which they attack or favour; and according to the number of individuals in whom these faculties are thus assisted or injured.

Q. Give me an example?

A. The action of saving a man's life is more virtuous than that of saving his wealth: the act of saving the lives of ten men is more so than that of saving the life of a single person: and an action, which is useful to the whole human race, is more virtuous than an action useful only to a single nation.

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Q. In what manner does the law of nature prescribe the practice of good and virtue, and forbid that of evil and of vice ?

A. By the advantages resulting from the practice of good and virtue in the preservation of our bodies, and the injuries which our very existence receives from the practice of evil and vice.

Q. Its precepts, then, are found in and founded upon action ?

A. Yes ; they are action itself, considered in its present effect and its future consequences.

Q. What division do you make of the virtues ?

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A. We divide them into three classes: 1st. Private virtues, or those which refer to single and insulated persons: 2d. Domestic virtues, or those which relate to families: 3d. Social virtues, or those which respect society at large.



CHAPTER V.

*Of Individual or Private Virtues—
Of Knowledge.*

Q. *WHICH are the private virtues?*

A. There are five principal ones: namely, knowledge; which comprehends prudence and wisdom.

2d. Temperance; which includes sobriety and chastity.

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3d. Courage ; or strength of body and mind.

4th. Activity ; that is, the love of labour, and a proper employment of our time.

5th. Lastly ; cleanliness, or purity of body, as well in our clothing as in our dwellings.

Q. How does the law of nature prescribe to us the possession of knowledge ?

A. In this way : The man, who is acquainted with the causes and effects of things, provides in a very extensive and certain manner for his own preservation and the

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developement of his faculties. Knowledge is for him, as it were, light acting upon its appropriate organ, making him discern all the objects which surround him, and in the midst of which he moves, with precision and clearness. And, for this reason, we used to say an *enlightened* man, to designate a wise and well-informed man. By the help of knowledge and information, we are never left without resources and means of subsistence ; and whence a philosopher, who had suffered shipwreck, observed justly to his

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companions, who were lamenting the loss of their fortunes, " As for me, I carry all my fortune in myself."

Q. What is the vice opposed to knowledge?

A. Ignorance.

Q. How does the law of nature forbid ignorance?

A. By the great injury which our existence sustains from it: for, the ignorant, who are unacquainted with either causes or effects, commit every instant mistakes, the most pernicious to themselves or others: like a blind man

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who walks groping his way, and who at every step stumbles against or is jostled by his companions.

Q. *What difference is there between an ignorant man and a fool?*

A. The same that there is between a blind man who ingenuously acknowledges his want of sight, and a blind man who pretends to see distinctly. Folly is ignorance, with a superadded pretension to knowledge.

Q. *Are ignorance and folly common?*

A. Yes; very common: they are the habitual and general disease

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fes of mankind. Above three thousand years since, the wisest of men observed, that the number of fools is infinite; and the world has not changed.

Q. *How happens this?*

A. Because to become informed is the work of much time and labour; and because men, born ignorant, but fearful of trouble, find it more convenient to remain blind, and pretend to see clearly.

Q. *What difference is there between the man of learning and the man of wisdom?*

A. The man of learning possesses the theory, and the man of wisdom the practice.

Q. *What is prudence?*

A. An anticipated view, a foresight, of effects and the consequences of every event: a foresight by which a man avoids the dangers which threaten him, and seizes and raises up opportunities which are favourable: whence it appears, that he provides, on a large and sure scale, for his present and future conservation; while the imprudent man, who

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neither calculates his progress nor his conduct, the efforts required, nor the resistances to overcome, falls every moment into a thousand difficulties and dangers, which, more or less, slowly destroy his faculties and his being.

Q. *When the gospel declares, Happy are the poor in spirit, Does it mean the ignorant and imprudent?*

A. No ; for, at the same time that it advises the simplicity of doves, it connects with it the prudent cunning of the serpent. By

simplicity of spirit is meant rectitude; and the precept of the gospel is no other than that of nature.



CHAPTER VI.

Of Temperance.

Q. *WHAT is temperance?*

A. A well-regulated employment of our faculties; which prevents our ever exceeding in our sensible pleasures the end of nature, self-conservation. It is the moderation of our passions.

Q. *What is the vice opposed to temperance?*

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A. The want of government over our passions; an over-great eagerness to possess enjoyments: in a word, cupidity.

Q. *What are the principal branches of temperance?*

A. Sobriety, and continence or chastity.

Q. *In what manner does the law of nature enjoin sobriety?*

A. By its powerful influence over our health. The man of sobriety digests his food with comfort; he is not oppressed by the weight of his aliment: his ideas are clear and easily impres-

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sed ; he performs every function well ; he attends with diligence to his business ; he grows old, free from sickness ; he does not throw away his money in remedies for disorders ; he enjoys with gay good-humour the goods which fortune or prudence have procured for him. Thus does generous nature make a thousand rewards flow from a single virtue.

Q. *By what means does she prohibit gluttony ?*

A. By the numerous evils attached to it. The glutton, oppressed by his aliment, digests with pain and difficulty ; his head,

disturbed by the fumes arising during bad digestion, is incapable of receiving neat and clear ideas; he gives himself up with fury to the inordinate movements of luxury and anger, which destroy his health; his body becomes fat, heavy, and unfit for labour; he passes through painful and expensive fits of sickness; he rarely lives to old age, and his latter part of life is marked by infirmity and disgust.

Q. *Ought we to look upon abstinence and fasting as virtuous actions?*

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A. Yes; after we have eaten too much; for, in that case, abstinence and fasting are efficacious and simple remedies; but, when the body has need of nourishment, to refuse it, and let it suffer through thirst or hunger, is madness, and a real sin against the law of nature.

Q. *In what light does this law consider drunkenness?*

A. As the vilest and most pernicious of vices. The drunkard, deprived of the sense and reason given us by God, profanes the gifts of the Divinity; he lowers

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himself to the condition of the brutes : incapable of directing his steps, he totters and falls as in a fit of epilepsy : he wounds himself, and endangers his own life : his weakness in this state renders him the play-thing and the scorn of all around him : he contracts, during his drunkenness, ruinous engagements, and loses the management of his affairs : he suffers violent and outrageous observations to escape him, which raise him up enemies, and bring him to repentance : he fills his house with

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trouble and chagrin ; and he concludes by a premature death, or an old age, comfortless and diseased.

Q. *Does the law of nature absolutely forbid the use of wine ?*

A. No ; it only forbids the abuses of it ; but as the passage, from the proper to the improper use of it, is, for the vulgar, very short and easy, perhaps those legislators, who have forbidden the use of wine, have, in so doing, rendered a service to mankind.

Q. *Does the law of nature forbid the use of certain meats and*

vegetables, on certain days, or during certain seasons?

A. No; it forbids only what is absolutely prejudicial to health: its precepts on this score vary as men do, and compose a very delicate and important science; for, the quality, the quantity, and the combination, of our aliments, have a very great influence, not only on the momentary affections of the mind, but likewise on its habits and dispositions. A man fasting is not the same as after a repast, though of the most sober kind. A glass of wine, a dish

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of coffee, produce various degrees of vivacity, activity, disposition to anger, sadness, or gaiety : one species of food, because it lies heavy on the stomach, renders a person morose and peevish ; another, which is easily digested, disposes to cheerfulness and love, and produces in us an inclination to be obliging. The use of vegetables, as they afford little nourishment, render the body weak, and induce repose, inactivity, and mildness of character : the use of flesh-meats, as they nourish much, and of spirituous

liquors, as they stimulate the nerves, induce liveliness, restlessness, audacity. Now, from these habits of taking different kinds of food, result constitutional habits, which form in the end various temperaments, each distinguished by a peculiar character; and hence it appears, why in hot countries legislators have promulgated, as laws, rules of diet. Long experience had taught the ancients, that the dietetic science composed a considerable portion of that of morals: among the Egyptians, among the ancient

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Persians, and even among the Greeks, in their Areopagus, affairs of consequence were never debated on, except the members of the council were fasting; and it has been remarked, that among every people who deliberate during the warmth of a repast, or during the fumes of digestion, the debates are invariably furious and turbulent, and their results frequently unreasonable and destructive of the public peace.



CHAPTER VII.

Of Continence.

Q. *DOES the law of nature prescribe continence?*

A. Yes; because moderation, in the enjoyment of the most violent of our sensations, is not only serviceable, but indispensable for the maintenance of our strength and health; and because it may be demonstrated by a simple cal-

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culation, that, in return for a few minutes of privation, we are repaid by long days of vigour of mind and body.

Q. *How does it forbid libertinism?*

A. By the innumerable evils which it entails upon our existence, physical and moral. The man, who abandons himself to it, becomes enervated and languid; he is no longer able to attend to his studies or his business; he contracts idle and expensive habits, which diminish his means of livelihood, his reputation, and his

credit ; his intrigues occasion him embarrassments, cares, quarrels, and law-suits, not to take into the account heavy and grievous diseases ; the decrease of his strength by an internal and slow poison ; the stupefaction of his intellect by the exhaustion of the nervous influence ; and, lastly, a premature and infirm old age.

Q. *Is that consummate chastity, which is so much inculcated in monastic institutions, regarded as a virtue by the natural law ?*

A. No ; for such chastity is neither of utility to the society

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at large where it is prevalent, nor even to the individuals who are rigorously observant of it: nay it is demonstrably prejudicial to both. In the first place, it is detrimental to society at large, because it checks the progress of its population, which is one of its great sources of wealth and power: and because the persons, who devote themselves to a life of celibacy, by confining their views and affections within the narrow sphere of their own existence, for the most part contract a selfish partiality for them-

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selves, which alienates their minds from the general interests of the community.

In the second place, it is injurious to individuals, because it excludes them from a multiplicity of affections and relations, which have a considerable share in the formation of the domestic and social virtues. Again, it frequently happens, from the circumstances of age, temperament, and diet, that absolute continence impairs the health, and lays the foundation of serious diseases, by counteracting those laws by which

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nature maintains and perpetuates the species. Not to mention that those who are such rigid and enthusiastic advocates for unlimited abstinence in this respect, even where their sincerity cannot be called in question, totally militate against their own doctrine, which consecrates the law of nature by the well-known command, "Be fruitful and multiply."

Q. *Why is chastity considered as a virtue of greater importance to women than to men?*

A. Because the breach of chastity in women is attended with

far more alarming and injurious consequences to themselves and to society ; for, exclusively of the afflictions and diseases of every denomination to which they are liable in common with the other sex, they incur all the various inconveniences that precede, accompany, and follow, a state of motherhood, of which they run the hazard ; and, if this should chance out of the pale of the law, they become exposed to the scorn and derision of the world, which unavoidably embitters the remaining portion of their existence.

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Again they are furcharged with the expenses arising from the maintenance and education of children that are unprotected and without relations: by which means they become impoverished and distressed, both in mind and fortune. In this state, deprived of that freshness and that health in which their charms chiefly consist, carrying about with them an unusual and painful burden, they are less sought after by the men; they find no solid establishment, they fall into poverty, misery, abasement, and drag on, in wretched-

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edness, a life of abject unhap-
pinefs.

Q. *Does the law of nature de-
scend to scruple our desires or
thoughts ?*

A. Yes; because, according to the physical laws of the human body, thoughts and desires awaken the senses, and soon stimulate to action. Moreover, by another law of nature, in the organization of our body, these actions become a species of mechanical want, repeated according to periods of days or weeks; so that, at any given epoch, the want or desire to per-

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from a given action, or produce a given secretion, always arises: and if this action or secretion are prejudicial to health, the habit becomes destructive of life itself. Thus desires and thoughts become of real importance in nature.

Q. *Ought modesty to be considered as a virtue?*

A. Yes; because modesty, considered as a bashful timidity with regard to certain actions, maintains the mind and body in all the habits tending to the good order and self-preservation of the individual.

A modest woman is esteemed,

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sought after, established in all the advantages of fortune which assure her existence, and render it agreeable ; while the immodest woman and the prostitute are despised, rejected, and abandoned to misery and disgrace.



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CHAPTER VIII.

Of Courage and Activity.

Q. *ARE courage and strength of body and mind, virtues according to the law nature?*

A. Yes; and very important virtues; for they are efficacious and indispensable means of effecting our preservation and well-being. The courageous and strong man repels oppression; defends

his life, his liberty, his property ; by his labour he procures for himself subsistence in abundance, and enjoys it with tranquillity and peace of mind. If any misfortune happens to him from which his prudence could not guard him, he supports it with firmness and resignation ; and, for this reason, the ancient moralists accounted strength and courage among their four principal virtues.

Q. *Ought weakness and cowardice to be considered as vices ?*

A. Yes ; since it is true that

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they are connected with a thousand calamities. The weak and cowardly live in the midst of care, and in perpetual agony; their health is undermined by the terror they are under, often an ill-founded one, of danger and attack: and this terror, which is itself an evil, is not the remedy of any other evil; on the contrary, it renders man a slave to whoever is desirous of oppressing him; and, by the subjection and abasement of all his faculties, degrades and corrupts his means of existence, and makes his life depend, as it were,

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on the will and caprice of other men.

Q. But, after what you have said of the influence of aliments, are not courage and strength, as well as many other virtues, in a great measure the effect of our temperament, or physical constitution ?

A. Yes ; this is true, to such a degree, that these qualities are transmitted to us in our birth, and by our blood, with the elements on which these depend. Repeated and unvarying facts prove, that, in every race of animals, certain physical and moral

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qualities, attached to the various individuals of each race, are augmented or diminished according to the combinations and admixture which take place between the several races.

Q. But if our wills and exertions are not sufficient to procure us these qualities, is it a crime in us to be destitute of them?

A. No; it is not a crime, but a misfortune; it is what the ancients called a melancholy fatality: but even, in this case, it still is in some measure in our power to acquire them; for, from the

moment that we have learnt on what physical elements depend such and such qualities, we are enabled to prepare for their production, and to excite them to unfold themselves by an able management of the elements; and in this consists the science of education, which, according as it is directed, perfects or renders worse both individuals and entire races, so as to change altogether their nature and inclinations: and this it is which renders so important the knowledge of the laws of nature, by which these operations

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and changes are effected with certainty and of necessity.

Q. *Why do you say that activity is a virtue according to the law of nature?*

A. Because the man, who labours and employs his time usefully, derives, from so doing, innumerable advantages with respect to his existence. Is he poor? his labour furnishes him with subsistence: and if, in addition, he is sober, continent, and prudent, he soon acquires many conveniences, and enjoys the sweets of life: his very labour produces

in him those virtues ; for, as long as he continues to employ his mind and his body, he is not affected by inordinate desires ; he is free from dullness ; he contracts mild and pleasant habits ; he augments his strength and his health ; and arrives to an old age of felicity and peace.

Q. Are idleness and sloth, then, vices in the order of nature ?

A. Yes ; and the most pernicious of all vices ; for, they lead to every other. In idleness and sloth, man remains ignorant, and even loses the knowledge which

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he had before acquired, falling into all the evils which accompany ignorance and folly. In idleness and sloth, man, devoured by listless dullness, gives himself up to all the lusts of sense, whose empire, as it increases and extends from day to day, renders him intemperate, gluttonous, luxurious, enervate, cowardly, base, and despicable. The certain effects of all which vices are, the ruin of his fortune, the wasting of his health, and the termination of his life in the anguish of disease and poverty.

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Q. *If I understand you, it would appear that poverty is a vice?*

A. No; it is not a vice; but still less is it a virtue; for, it is much more frequently injurious than useful; it is even commonly the result of vice, or its first occasion; for, every individual vice conducts towards indigence; even to the privation of the necessaries of life; and when a man is in want of the necessaries, he is on the point of endeavouring to procure them by vicious methods; that is, methods hurt-

ful to society. All the private virtues, on the contrary, tend to procure for man an abundance of subsistence; and, when he has more than he can consume, it becomes more easy for him to give to others, and to perform actions useful to society.

Q. Do you look upon riches as a virtue?

A. No; but still less are they a vice. It is their employment only which can be denominated virtuous or vicious, according as it is useful or hurtful to man and to

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society. Wealth is an instrument, whose use and employment only determine its viciousness or virtue.



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CHAPTER IX.

Of Cleanliness.

Q. *WHY do you rank cleanliness in the class of virtues?*

A. Because it is really one of the most important, as it has a powerful influence on the health and preservation of the body. Cleanliness, as well in our garments as in our dwellings, prevents the pernicious effects of

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dampness, of bad smells, and of contagious vapours arising from substances abandoned to putrefy : cleanliness keeps up a free perspiration, renews the air, refreshes the blood, and even animates and enlivens the mind. Whence we see that persons, attentive to the cleanliness of their persons and their habitations, are in general more healthy, and less exposed to diseases, than those who live in filth and nastiness ; and it may moreover be remarked, that cleanliness brings with it, through-

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out every part of domestic discipline, habits of order and arrangement, which are among the first and best methods and elements of happiness.

Q. *Is uncleanness, then, or filthiness, a real vice?*

A. Yes; as real as drunkenness or as sloth, from which, for the most part, it derives its origin. Uncleanness is a secondary, and often a first, cause of a multitude of slight disorders, and even of dangerous sicknesses. It is well known, in medicine, that it generates the itch, the scald-head, the leprosy,

no less certainly than the same disorders are produced by corrupted or acrid aliments : that it contributes to the contagious power of the plague and of malignant fevers ; that it even gives birth to them in hospitals and prisons ; that it occasions rheumatism, by incrusting the skin with dirt, and checking perspiration ; not to mention the disgraceful inconvenience of being devoured by insects, the unclean appendage of abject misery.

For this cause, the greater part of the ancient legislators have

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constituted cleanliness, under the title of *purity*, one of the essential dogmas of their several religions: hence, the reason of their driving from society, and subjecting even to corporal punishment, those who suffered themselves to be attacked by the diseases which are engendered by uncleanness; why they instituted and consecrated the ceremonies of ablution, bathing, baptism, and of purification even by fire, and by the aromatic effluvia of incenses, myrrhs, benzoin, &c. So that the whole system of impure taints,

all those rites referring to things clean and unclean, which in after-times degenerated into prejudices and abuses, were, in their origin, derived from the judicious observations, made by wise and well-informed men, on the great influence which the cleanliness of the body, both with respect to its clothing and its habitation, possesses over the health, and, by an immediate consequence, over the mind and the moral faculties.

Thus all the individual or private virtues have, for their more or less direct and more or less proxi-

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mate end, the preservation of the man who practises them; while, by the preservation of each individual, they tend to insure that of the family and of society at large, which is nothing more than the united sum of those individuals.



CHAPTER X.

Of Domestic Virtues.

Q. *WHAT do you mean by domestic virtues?*

A. I mean the practice of those actions which are useful to a family, that is, to a number of persons living under one roof.

Q. *What are those virtues?*

A. Economy, parental affection, conjugal love, filial love,

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brotherly love, and the fulfilment of the reciprocal duties of master and servant.

Q. What is economy?

A. Taken in its most extensive signification, it is the proper administration of whatever concerns the existence of the family or household; but, as subsistence holds the first rank among these circumstances, the word economy has been restricted to the employment of our money in procuring for us the primary wants of life.

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Q. *Why is economy a virtue?*

A. Because the man who enters into no useless expence always possesses a superabundance, which constitutes real wealth, and by means of which he procures for himself and his family all that is truly useful and convenient ; without taking into the account, that by this means he ensures to himself resources against accidental and unforeseen losses ; so that himself and his family live in a tranquil and pleasant state of ease, which is the basis of all human happiness.

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Q. *Are dissipation and prodigality, then, vices?*

A. Yes; for they bring a man at last to the want of the necessities of life; he falls into poverty, misery, and abject disgrace; so that even his acquaintance, fearful of being obliged to restore to him what he has squandered with them or upon them, fly from him as a debtor from his creditor, and he is left abandoned by all the world.

Q. *What is parental affection?*

A. The assiduous care which a parent takes to bring up his

children in the habit of every action useful to themselves and to society.

Q. *In what respect is parental tenderness a virtue, with respect to parents?*

A. In as much as the parents, who bring up their children in good habits, lay up for the whole course of their lives those enjoyments and aids which are grateful to us at all times, and ensure, against old age, those supports and consolations which are required by the wants and calamities of that period of life.

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Q. *Is parental affection a common virtue?*

A. No; notwithstanding all parents make a parade of it, it is a rare virtue; they do not *love* their children; they *care for* them and they spoil them: what they *love* in them, is the agency of their wills, the instruments of their power, the trophies of their vanity, the play-things of their leisure hours. It is not so much the good of their children that they propose, as their submission and obedience: and if amongst children we find so many ex-

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amples of filial ingratitude, it is because amongst parents there are so many examples of ignorant and despotic kindness.

Q. *Why do you say that conjugal love is a virtue?*

A. Because the concord and union which are the consequence of the affection subsisting between married persons establish in the bosom of their family a multitude of habits which contribute to its prosperity and conservation: united by the bonds of marriage, they love their household and quit it rarely;

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they superintend every part of its administration ; they attend to the education of their children ; they keep up the respectfulness and fidelity of their domestics ; they prevent all disorder and dissipation ; and, by the whole of their good conduct, live in ease and reputation : while those married persons, who have no affection for each other, fill their dwelling with quarrels and distress, excite war among their children and among their domestics, and lead them both into every kind of vicious habit ; so that each wastes, pillages, and

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robs, in their several way : their revenues are absorbed without return ; debts follow debts ; the discontented parties fly each other and recur to law-suits ; and the whole family falls into disorder, ruin, disgrace, and the want of the necessaries of life.

Q. *Is adultery a crime according to the law nature ?*

A. Yes ; for it is followed by a numerous train of habits hurtful to the married persons, and to their family. The wife or the husband, given up to the love of

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strangers, neglect their own dwelling, desert it, and divest as much as possible its revenues from their right use, spending them on the object of their affections: hence quarrels, scandal, law-suits, the contempt of children and servants, the pillage and final ruin of the whole house: not to mention that the adulterous woman commits the most heinous of all robberies, giving heirs to her husband of foreign blood, who deprive of their lawful portion his true offspring.

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Q. *What is filial love?*

A. It is, on the part of children, the practice of such actions as are useful to themselves and to their parents.

Q. *What motives does the law of nature present to enforce filial love?*

A. Three chief motives: 1st, Sentiment; for, from our earliest infancy, the affectionate solicitudes of our parents produce in us the mild habits of attachment. 2d. The sense of justice; for, children owe their parents a return, and, as it were, a reparation, for

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the troubles, and even for the expenses, which they have occasioned them. 3d. Personal interest ; for, if we act ill towards our progenitors, we offer our own children examples of rebellion and ingratitude, which authorize them to render us the like at any future day.

Q. Ought we to understand by filial love a passive and blind submission ?

A. No ; but a reasonable submission, founded on an acquaintance with the mutual rights and duties of parents and of chil-

dren; rights and duties, without whose observance, their conduct towards each other can amount to nothing better than disorder.

Q. *Why is brotherly love a virtue?*

A. Because the concord and union which result from the mutual affection of brethren, establish the power, safety, and preservation, of families. Brethren in union mutually defend each other from all oppression, assist each other in their mutual wants, support each other under misfortune, and thus secure their com-

mon existence ; while brethren in a state of disunion, each being abandoned to his personal strength, fall into all the inconveniences of insulation from society and of individual feeble ness. This truth was ingeniously expressed by that king of Scythia, who, on his death-bed, having called his children round him, ordered them to break a bundle of arrows : when the young men, though in full vigour, were not able to accomplish this, he took the bundle in his turn, and, having untied it, broke each separate

arrow with his fingers. Behold, said he, the effect of union: united in a body, you will be invincible; taken separately, you will be broken like reeds.

Q. *What are the reciprocal duties of masters and servants?*

A. The practice of such actions as are respectively and equitably useful to each; and here begin the relations of society; for, the rule, and measure, of these respective actions is the equilibrium or equality between the service and the reward; between what the one performs and the

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other gives, which is the fundamental basis of all society.

Thus all the domestic and individual virtues refer more or less immediately, but always without varying, to the physical object of the amelioration and conservation of man; and are, in this view, precepts resulting from the fundamental law proposed by nature in his formation.



CHAPTER XI.

Of the Social Virtues, and of Justice.

Q. *WHAT is society?*

A. Every aggregated re-union of men living together under the regulations of a contract tacit or expressed for their common preservation.

Q. *Are the social virtues many in number?*

A. Yes; we may count as many as there are actions useful

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to society ; but they may be all reduced to one principle.

Q. *What is this fundamental principle ?*

A. Justice, which itself alone comprehends all the social virtues.

Q. *Why do you say that justice is the fundamental, and almost only, virtue of social life ?*

A. Because it alone embraces the practice of all those actions which are useful to society ; and that every virtue, under the name of charity, humanity, probity, love of country, sincerity, generosity, simplicity of manners, and mo-

desty, are but varied forms, and diversified applications of this axiom, “ Do unto another only that which thou wouldst he should do unto thee ;” which is the definition of justice.

Q. *How does the law of nature ordain justice ?*

A. By means of three physical attributes which are inherent in the organization of man.

Q. *What are these attributes ?*

A. Equality, liberty, property.

Q. *In what sense is equality a physical attribute of man ?*

A. Because all men, having e-

equally eyes, hands, a mouth, ears, and being alike under the necessity of making use of them for their life's sake, are by this very fact equally entitled to life, and to the use of the elements which contribute to its support. They are all equal before God.

Q. Do you pretend that all men hear, see, and feel, equally well; that they have equal wants and equal and like passions?

A. No; for it is a matter of certainty and daily experience, that one man is short and another long-sighted; that one eats much

and another little; that one has moderate and another violent passions; in a word, that a grown person is weak both in body and mind, while another is strong in both.

Q. *They are, in fact, then really unequal?*

A. Yes; in the unfolding of their faculties and powers, but not in the nature and essence of these powers: it is a stuff of the same kind, but whose dimensions are not equal, nor its weight and value the same, with those of some other pieces: our language has no

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word calculated to express at the same time sameness of nature and diversity of form and employment. It is a relative equality, and for this reason I said, equal before God, and in the order of nature.

Q. Why is liberty called a physical attribute of man?

A. Because all men possessing senses fitted and sufficient for their preservation, no one having need of the eye of another man in order to see, of his ear to hear, of his mouth to eat, or of his foot to walk, they are all made, by this means, naturally independent and

free. No one is of necessity subjected to another's rule, nor has right of dominion over him.

Q. *But if a man is born strong, has he not a natural right to master and rule over him who is born weak?*

A. No; for it is neither with respect to himself a matter of necessity, nor a convention between the two; and in this instance we make improper use of the word right, which in its true sense signifies nothing more than justice, or reciprocal faculties and power.

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Q. How is property a physical attribute of man?

A. Since every man is formed equal and similar to his fellows, and consequently free and independent, every one is the absolute master, the entire proprietor, of his body, and the products of his labour.

Q. How is justice derived from these three attributes?

A. From this circumstance: that men, being equal, free, and owing nothing to each other, have no right to demand any thing of their fellows, but in proportion

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as they return for it something equivalent; in proportion as the balance of what is given to what is paid remains in equilibrium; and it is this equality, this equilibrium, which is called justice and equity;*—that is to say, equality and justice are synonymous words; are the same natural law, of which all the social virtues are but applications and derivatives.

* *Æquitas, æquilibrium, æqualitas*, are all of the same family.



CHAPTER XII.

Developement of the Social Virtues.

Q. *UNFOLD to me how the social virtues are derived from the law of nature. How is charity, or the love of our neighbour, a precept or application of this law.*

A. By reason of the laws of equality and reciprocity; for, when we do injury to another, we give him the right of doing us injury

in his turn. Thus, by attacking the existence of another, we make an attack upon our own, in consequence of the law of reciprocity. On the contrary, when we do good to our neighbour, we have ground and reason to expect an exchange of good, an equivalent ; and such is the character of all the social virtues, to be useful to the man who practises them, by the right of reciprocity which they communicate to him over those to whom his good offices have been of service.

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Q. *Charity then is nothing more than justice?*

A. Yes; it is nothing more than justice, with this single difference, that strict justice confines itself to the assertion, “Do not to others the evil which thou wouldst not they should do unto thee:” and that charity, or the love of our neighbour, goes farther, even to say, “Do unto others the good which you wish to receive from them.” Thus the Gospel, when it said that this precept contained all the Law and the Prophets, did no more than

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announce a precept of the law of nature.

Q. Does it command us to forgive injuries ?

A. Yes ; in as much as such forgiveness consists with the preservation of ourselves.

Q. Does it contain the precept of turning the one cheek after being smitten on the other ?

A. No ; for, in the 1st place, it is not consistent with the precept which orders us to love our neighbour *as ourselves* ; since, in that case, we should have more love for him who attacks our well-

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being than for ourselves : 2d. Such a command, taken literally, encourages the wicked to oppression and injustice ; and the law of nature has been more wise, in prescribing a given measure of courage and moderation, which makes us forget a first injury, if occasioned by momentary warmth, but which punishes every act tending to oppression.

Q. *Does the law of nature command us to do good to others, without measure or limitation ?*

A. No ; for it is a certain means of occasioning ingratitude.

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Such is the power of the sentiment of justice implanted in the hearts of men, that they do not give us credit even for acts of kindness, if accompanied with indiscretion. They have but one measure—that of Justice.

Q. *Is alms-giving a virtuous action?*

A. Yes; when conducted according to the same rule; otherwise it degenerates into imprudence and vice, in as much as it encourages indolence, which is hurtful both to the beggar and to the society. No one has a right

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to enjoy the good or labour of another without rendering an equivalent by his own labour.

Q. *Does the law of nature consider as virtues, hope and faith, which are usually conjoined with charity?*

A. No ; for they are ideas not founded on realities ; and, if any good effects result from them, these are rather to the profit of those who have not imbibed such ideas than to those who have ; so that it might be, perhaps, allowable to say, that faith and hope are the virtues of dupes, which

turn to the advantage of rogues and cheats.

Q. *Does the law of nature prescribe probity?*

A. Yes ; for probity is nothing more than a respect paid to our own rights through the medium of the rights of others ; a respect derived from a prudent and well-made calculation of our own interests, compared with those of others.

Q. *But does not this calculation, which includes the complicated interests and rights of the social state, demand such light, and such know-*

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ledge of things, as to render it a science of difficult acquisition?

A. Yes; and a science so much the more delicate, as the man of probity pronounces sentence in his own cause.

Q. *Is probity, then, a mark of an enlarged and correct mind?*

A. Yes; for the man of probity almost always neglects some present interest for the sake of one which is future; while, on the other hand, the knave is willing to lose a great interest to come for the sake of some trifling one which is present.

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Q. *Knavery, then, is a sign of false judgement and narrowness of mind?*

A. Yes ; and rogues may be defined to be ignorant or foolish speculators, for they know not their own interests ; and, though they affect wariness and cunning, their artifices seldom fail to expose them, and make them known for what they are ; to deprive them of the confidence and esteem of others, and of all the advantages which might thence result to their social and physical existence. They neither live in peace

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with themselves nor with others ; and, incessantly alarmed by their conscience and their enemies, they enjoy no other real happiness than that of escaping from the executioner.

Q. Does the law of nature forbid theft ?

A. Yes ; for the man, who steals from another, grants him the liberty to steal in his turn : hence no security in property, nor even in the means of self-preservation. Thus the man who does injury to another, by a species of re-action, is hurt himself.

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Q. Does it forbid the inclination to theft ?

A. Yes ; for this inclination naturally leads to action : hence the reason of considering envy as a sin.

Q. How does it forbid murder ?

A. By the most powerful motives addressed to the desire of self-preservation : for, 1st. The man, who attacks another, exposes himself to the risk of being killed, according to the law of self-defence : 2d. If he kills his opponent, he gives an equal right, founded on the same law, to the

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relations and friends of the deceased, and even to the whole community, of killing him, and his life is no longer in security.

Q. How can a man, according to the law of nature, repair any injury which he has committed?

A. By conferring a proportionable benefit upon those whom he has injured.

Q. Does this law allow him to repair it by prayers, vows, offerings to God, fastings, or mortifications?

A. No; for none of these things have any relation to the action which is meant to be atoned

for: they neither restore to him who has been robbed what he has lost, whether it be property or reputation; nor life to him who has been deprived of it; consequently they fail with regard to justice: they constitute an illegitimate contract, by which one man sells to another a good of which he himself is not possessed: they tend to a depravation of morals, as they embolden men to commit every species of crime, in the hope of expiation: and they have been the real sources of all those evils which have con-

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stantly tormented every nation, whose institutions permitted these expiatory practices.

Q. *Is sincerity enjoined by the law of nature?*

A. Yes ; for lying, perfidy, and perjury, excite amongst men distrust, dissension, hatred, revenge, and a multitude of evils, which tend to the destruction of society ; whilst sincerity and good faith establish confidence, concord, peace, and the other infinite advantages, which are the necessary result of such a happy state of things.

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Q. Does it prescribe mildness and modesty?

A. Yes; for an assuming and rude deportment, while it alienates from us the hearts of other men, infuses into them a disposition to do us disservice: ostentation and vanity, by wounding their self-love and exciting their jealousy, prevent us from attaining the point of real utility.

Q. Does it prescribe humility as a virtue?

A. No; for there is a natural propensity in the human heart to feel a secret contempt for every

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thing which conveys to it the idea of weakness ; and, by abasing ourselves, we encourage in others pride and oppression : we should hold the balance with an even hand.

Q. You have classed amongst the social virtues, simplicity of manners ; what do you mean by that expression ?

A. I mean the confining our wants and desires, to what is really useful for the existence of the individual and his family : that is to say, the man of *simple manners*

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has few wants, and is content with little.

Q. How is this virtue recommended to us?

A. By the numerous advantages, which it bestows both upon the individual and upon society at large; for, the man, who has few wants, liberates himself at once from a crowd of cares, troubles, and toils; avoids a number of disputes and quarrels, which arise from the eager desire of gain; is free from the cares of ambition, the inquietudes of possession, and the fears of loss; meeting every

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where with more than sufficient for his wants, he is the truly rich man ; always content with what he has, he is happy at a small expence ; and the world at large, fearing no rivalship from him, suffer him to enjoy tranquillity, and are disposed to do him service.

Again, if this virtue of simplicity were extended to a whole people, it secures abundance to them ; every thing, which they do not immediately consume, becomes to them a source of trade and commerce to a very great extent ; they labour, they manufacture,

and sell their productions, to greater advantage than others, and attain the summit both of external and internal prosperity.

Q. *What vice is the direct opposite of this virtue?*

A. Cupidity and luxury.

Q. *Is luxury a vice both in the individual and in society at large?*

A. Yes; and to such an extent, that it may be said to include in it the seeds of all others; for, the man, who makes many things necessary to his happiness, imposes at the same time upon himself all the cares and submits

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to all the means of acquiring them, whether they be just or unjust. Has he already one enjoyment, he wishes for another; and, in the midst of superfluities, he is never rich: a commodious habitation will not satisfy him, he must have a superb hotel; he is not content with a plentiful table, he must have rare and costly meats; he must have splendid furniture, expensive apparel, and a long, useless, train of footmen, horses, carriages, and women; he must be constantly at the gaming-table, or at places of public entertainment.

Now, to support their expences, a great deal of money is requisite, and every mode of procuring this is considered at first as lawful, and, afterwards, necessary; he begins by borrowing, he then swindles, robs, plunders, becomes bankrupt, is at war with mankind, ruins others, and is himself ruined.

Again, if we consider the effects of luxury upon a nation, it produces the same ravages upon a large scale; in consequence of its consuming within itself all its productions, it is poor in the midst of abundance; it has nothing to

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fell to the foreigner ; it manufactures at a heavy expense ; it sells its produce at a dear rate, and becomes a tributary for every thing which it imports : it loses its respectability, its strength, and its means of defence and preservation abroad ; whilst, at home, it is undermined, and the bond of union between its members is dissolved. All its citizens, being greedy after enjoyments, are perpetually struggling with each other for the attainment of them ; all are either inflicting injuries, or have the disposition to do so ; and hence

arise those actions and habits of usurpation, which compose what is called *moral corruption*, or intestine war between the members of the same society. Luxury produces rapacity, rapacity the invasion of others by violence or by breach of public faith: from luxury are derived the corruption of the judge, the venality of the witness, the dishonesty of the husband, the prostitution of the wife, parental cruelty, filial ingratitude, the avarice of the master, the theft of the servant, the robbery of public officers of government, the in-

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justice of the legislator, lying, perfidy, perjury, assassination, and all the disorders which destroy society ; so that the ancient moralists had an accurate perception of truth, when they declared that all the social virtues were founded upon a simplicity of manners, a limitation of wants, and contentment with a little ; and we may take as a certain scale of the virtues or vices of a man, the proportion which his expenses bear to his revenue, and calculate, from his demands for money, the extent of his probity, his integrity in fulfil-

ling his engagements, his devotion to the public cause, and the sincerity of his attachment to his country (*patrie*).

Q. *What do you mean by the word country (patrie) ?*

A. I understand by that word a community of citizens, who, united by fraternal sentiments and reciprocal wants, unite their individual forces, for the purposes of general security, the re-action of which upon each of them assumes the beneficial and protecting character of *paternity (paternité)*. In society, the members of it form a

bank of interest: in a country (*patrie*), they constitute a family of tender attachments; by means of which charity and the love of our neighbour are extended to a whole nation. Now, as charity cannot be separated from justice, no member of this family can pretend to the enjoyment of any advantages, except in proportion to his exertions; if he consume more than this proportion, he, of course, encroaches upon another; and he can only attain the means of being generous or disinterested, in proportion as his expenses are

confined within the limits of his acquisitions or possessions.

Q. *What is your deduction from these principles?*

A. I conclude, from these principles, that all the social virtues consist in the performance of actions useful both to society and to the individual:

That they may all be traced to the physical object of the preservation of man:

That nature, having implanted in our bosoms the necessity of this preservation, imposes all the consequences arising from it as a law,

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and prohibits as a crime whatever counteracts the operation of this principle :

That we have within us the germ of all virtue and of all perfection : that we have only to attend to the means of exciting it into action :

That we are happy, in exact proportion to the obedience we yield to those laws which nature has established with a view to our preservation :

That all wisdom, all perfection, all law, all virtue, all philosophy, consist in the practice of

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the following axioms, which are founded upon our natural organization :

- Preserve thyself.
- Instruct thyself.
- Moderate thyself.
- Live for thy fellow-creatures, in order that they may live for thee.

THE END.

